

The Purpose of Monotheism and its Future

Polytheism, the worship of various spirits and deities, has existed in many forms all across the world since time immemorial. However, these religions have since been more or less eclipsed by monotheistic Abrahamic religions in the Americas, Africa, Europe and Near East. The exceptions are in Asia and India, where Buddhism took root.

Thus, why were the native faiths of Asia and India able to coexist harmoniously with Buddhism while the historical religions of Europe, America and Africa could not do the same with the Abrahamic religions?

The answer is that the native deities and philosophies of Ancient China and India were much more well behaved, profound and reasonable than those of the rest of the world.

For instance, Taoist, Confucian and Vedic texts all contain numerous and strict moral principles that cover body, speech and mind. The Taoist Treatise on Response and Retribution alone lists hundreds of moral precepts covering fields such as commerce, law, governance and family. Moreover, Taoist scriptures attach much importance towards the systematic accumulation of pious virtues and good deeds, including but not limited to: Charitable giving, mercy, filial piety, public works, helping orphans and widows, releasing captured animals, respect for nature, building roads, making boats available for all who need to cross, social propriety, reversing miscarriages of justice, making offerings and so forth. Furthermore, abolitionism has been a regular occurrence throughout Chinese history and Vedic India had unusually humane laws of war.

However, the moral track record of the Polytheistic religions of the West, Americas and Africa leaves a lot to be desired. From cruel child sacrifices (Levant and Carthage) to sacred prostitution and Aztec atrocities, from ever-scheming, over-passionate, lustful, wrathful and capricious gods (Greek and Roman pantheon) to the widespread practice and approval of prostitution, chattel slavery, suicide, pederasty, scapegoating, black art, looting, militarism and war crimes, it is clear that consistent and high grade morality was not provided by the original native religions in an effective manner.

Such spirits and deities were always classified as evil in Ancient China. For instance, according to Chapter VI of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's Commentary on the Earth Store Sutra:

“....and **evil spirits** who are deviant spirits because they do not observe the rules criticize good men and good women. Some deviant spirits also go to temples such as temples where offerings are made to Lord Guan. Lord Guan is not always there; on the occasions when Lord Guan is absent, he goes to the temple, pretending to be Lord Guan to enjoy bloody flesh. People may offer him swine, lamb, or cow, all of which are food with blood that he enjoys. There are big evil ghosts such as kumbhanda ghosts that look like a winter melon. These ghosts are also called ghosts that press on people while these people are sleeping. These big evil ghosts make such sleeping individuals mute and immobile. There are also small evil ghosts who may possess plants to display their spiritual powers so that people will believe them. For example, Nanhua Monastery had a camphor tree go and receive the precepts. Before it even received the precepts, it wielded its spiritual powers. For instance, anyone who goes there to light incense will receive a response such as recovery from some illness. Or someone recovers his lost items after lighting

incense before this tree. There was a variety of others. That person thinks that this is true miracles from a Bodhisattva, so he may go and show his appreciation with offerings of sacrificial chickens, pigs, or other animals. With these items, he has food to eat. These are small evil ghosts. There are innumerable things in this world, so if you do not understand the Buddhadharma, you may very easily think that this type of evil spirits and evil ghosts are truly efficacious Bodhisattvas. People who study the Buddhadharma ought not to think that the Buddhadharma is something to do with miracles. No. Understand the principles in the Buddhadharma to avoid such deceptions.”

Therefore, the various idols, spirits and deities the pre-Christian Europeans etc. worshipped were mostly evil ghosts who were taking advantage of them by exploiting people’s fears and cravings to get sacrifices, hence the general lack of morality. They placed passions above profound and long lasting karmic consequences.

Moreover, according to Master Hsuan Hua’s commentary on an important passage of the Shurangama Sutra:

“....This refers to the Christian God. They want to be the "leader of heavenly beings." They want to rule the heavens. "I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. I will manifest as Shakra for that kind of living being." Shakra is the Heavenly Lord - God. Did you know that the Holy Mother of Catholicism is Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva? Catholics believe in the Holy Mother, because they want to be born in the heavens. So Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as a goddess to teach and transform them, enabling them to be born in the heavens. Of course, they will have to come

back again from the heavens, but gradually they will make progress. Why does Gwan Yin manifest and speak a dharma to help people get born in the heavens? His ultimate aim is to get them to believe in the Buddha. But since at present their wish is to be born in the heavens, he teaches them how to get reborn there. When they return from there, they will eventually come to believe in the Buddha. Ordinary people feel that the time involved in this process is quite long, but actually in the Buddhas' eyes, it is a mere moment, a blink of an eye. This method can be likened to that of parents who want their child to master an excellent profession, but whose child does not wish to study that profession. The parents comply and allow the child to study what he wishes, but after several false starts, he eventually winds up studying that excellent profession his parents suggested. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's method for teaching and transforming living beings is to fulfill whatever wishes they might have. But the ultimate aim is always to bring living beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.”

Thus, the supremely compassionate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appear in various forms to help heavily deluded beings make upward progress as they circle and cycle in the glooming Samsara. They appear in the closest form to Buddhism that those without sufficient merit to accept Buddhism in its pure form can accept. So in this case, it is Christianity. The purpose is always the same: To teach them to eschew vice and embrace virtue with discipline and unwavering faith, and to stay away from evil ideas and evil ghosts.

Thus, the reason Christianity displaced the original polytheistic faiths of Europe and the Americas is that it was necessary to prevent the evil karma created by people's foolish adherence to the influence of evil ghosts from accumulating further. Christianity

is akin to a friend holding a person down to prevent him from leaping off a cliff into the abyss of karmic retribution. It is an ingenious stopgap faith deployed by the Buddhas.

However, the more reasonable, merciful and moral native faiths of China and India did not need to be replaced as they helped pave the way for greater endeavors. Since all Buddhist teachings are based on the Threefold Training of “Sila, Samadhi and Prajna” (Virtue, Meditation and Wisdom), the native faiths of China and India (i.e. Confucianism, Taoism and Vedic teachings) easily blended with and supported Buddhism. The consistent and superior virtue and propriety that these teachings promoted had created communities receptive towards profound truth and virtue. As virtue begets tranquil stillness of heart, the deep Samadhi taught by the Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism became manifest to such peoples.

For the morality they were already accustomed to already reflected the five precepts, they were able to easily understand and cultivate the profound Samadhi and Wisdom of the Buddha. Thus, unlike in the West and elsewhere, the native faiths of China and India were peacefully co-opted by Buddhism, and are now, as they have been for thousands of years, mutually complementing. For instance, the Four Heavenly Kings were originally Vedic Ghost Kings who converted and became Buddhist Dharma-protectors.

Nevertheless, as the old saying goes: Order arises in the height of chaos, and chaos rears its ugly head at the pinnacle of order. Thus, even though Christianity and monotheism are not as profound or accurate as Buddhism, and are now often in conflict with the modern changes in life, technology and society, it has actually laid the psychological foundation for a spiritual renaissance of great reach and unmatched success. For if one

looks closely enough, it becomes clear that they have laid the groundwork for a soon to come golden era of Pure Land Buddhism in the West and Americas.

It is no secret that religions like Christianity are intolerant of other faiths, however, there is actually a deeper meaning behind this exclusiveness. Even though Buddhism has 84,000 Dharma-doors that all lead to Bodhi, only Amitabha Pure Land Buddhism can allow for assured and widespread success in seeking Bodhi in the current Dharma-ending age (which will last for nearly another ten thousand years from now). It is not that the other Dharma-doors are not valid, it is simply that sentient beings of today and the foreseeable future are so sunk in past karmic burdens that success via practicing Zen or other forms of esoteric meditation is simply out of the question. This reality echoes the concept of original sin.

Thus, there is no other way but the grace of Amitabha. However, the sutras make it very clear that those who wish to be reborn in Amitabha's Pure Land must single-mindedly take refuge in Him, resolutely call His name and abide by Him. No thoughts may stray to any other deity, Sage or Dharma-door. Absolute focus and faith is paramount. Moreover, Christianity's strong prohibition against lust mirrors the Buddhist principle that lust is the greatest impediment standing in the way of mindfulness.

Those who achieve salvation through unwavering faith in Amitabha have their evil karma shouldered by Amitabha's supremely wondrous 48 Vows, thereby allowing them to swiftly cruise to Buddha-hood while under the protection of the merit and blessings of His Land of Ultimate Bliss.

In fact, according to the Contemplation Sutra and the Infinite Life Sutra, if those who have long committed all kinds of evil and

blasphemy were to repent at their time of death and single-mindedly vow to be reborn in His Pure Land, even if they had only heard about the Pure Land teachings but a moment before, and hold his name for one to ten times, they will be able to do so.

Thus, a virtuous heart, unwavering faith and acceptance of grace are important causes for rebirth in the Pure Land.

From this, we can infer that Christianity's tenets are made to psychologically acclimate people's minds towards single-minded faith in Amitabha. The simplicity, straightforwardness and generous grace of Amitabha has made Pure Land Buddhism the "hardest Dharma-door" in Chinese Buddhism. This is because it is so easy that those accustomed to more varied and esoteric Dharma-doors find it hard to believe. It is a kindness that offers everything for nothing but the willingness to receive. Thus, Christianity's rejection of diverse deities is actually a psychological device to acclimate people into accepting (in a future time) unwavering single-minded faith in Amitabha's name and grace. When the time is right, they will naturally have affinity for Pure Land principles and be able to easily shift their focused faith from God to Amitabha. This is just like how the loyal subjects of a long time and centralized monarchy will smoothly acknowledge the authority of the new king once the previous one passes. However, the transition from a fractured state to a centralized monarchy would be much more difficult.

In conclusion, monotheistic religions such as Christianity were devised by the Buddhas to serve as an intermediate solution to subdue rampant superstitions, create a consistent and merciful moral foundation that embraces virtue and eschews vice, and pave the way for the future growth of Pure Land Buddhism—which will give Buddha-hood to multitudes of people across the West, Americas and Africa.

In other words, it is the fertile topsoil spread by the Buddhas upon barren grounds in order to sprout the fruits of Bodhi.

Thus, there are no grounds for religious discrimination and strife. Those who are Christians should do their best to cultivate virtue, faith and charity, and those who can accept Buddhism should cultivate in accordance with the Pure Land teachings. To each his own, for both roads lead to true home!